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Revisionism at the Met

On the new Galleries for Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century European Paintings and Sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

In 1923, Picasso observed: “To me there is no past or future in art. If a work of art cannot live always in the present, it must not be considered at all. The art of the Greeks, of the Egyptians, of the great painters who lived in other times, is not an art of the past; perhaps it is more alive today than it ever was.” And nowhere in New York this past year has art’s life and breath been more apparent, more revived, than at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Beginning last April, with the reopening of the final rooms of the Met’s astonishing new Greek and Roman Galleries, one magnificent reinstallation or exhibition has followed another.

In the Met’s Greek and Roman Galleries, brilliantly redesigned by the architect Kevin Roche and impeccably reinstalled by Carlos A. Picón, the art of the past is reborn as an art of the present. The galleries do not feel like a collection or a repository. T ...

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